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Eminem Broke His Nose, But TV Boxing Was Hush's Big Break

'Contender' rapper has new LP due in August.
By archive-Corey-Moss
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SANTA MONICA, California -- As a veteran of the Detroit hip-hop scene, Hush goes way back with Eminem.

As kids, the two spent long nights together plastering the city with their stickers. Later, they both had children within the same two-week span. And then there's that other thing, the one that seems to follow Hush around like a shadow.

"Oh yes, the infamous story," Hush said with a smile. "Well, we had a falling out. It was just over some stupid street crap and we just had a misunderstanding and got into a fight and my nose got broke."

Yes, Hush has the distinct honor of being the guy whose nose Eminem broke (in a fight immortalized in "8 Mile" at that), but ... well, at least it all worked out.

"It's cool because most people don't become friends and stay friends after fights, but we were able to overcome something stupid that we did when we were younger, and now we're adults with kids and families and we've got careers and we're able to be cool now," Hush explained. "And we're closer now than we were before, and that's even better."

These days, Em is more interested in breaking Hush into the business than breaking his face. He produced Hush's first single and appears in the video.

"It's cool because [my label] Geffen and [Em's label] Interscope are sister labels, so he's able to tell me a little bit about that side of the business and stuff like that," Hush said.

Hush earned his record deal on his own, though, after self-releasing CDs in the Midwest and garnering acclaim for innovative tracks like "150 MCs," in which he name-drops 150 rappers, all as metaphors. (And yes, there really are 150 MCs. "You'd be surprised," he joked. "Wu-Tang is eight of 'em.")

When he was invited to showcase for labels in Los Angeles, Hush immediately stood out from other rappers because he performs with a rock band.

"A lot of early hip-hop had a lot of rock guitar on it, Public Enemy, LL [Cool J], Run-DMC," Hush said. "And I want to be at the forefront to bring that back."

Once signed, Hush's aggressive guitar-rap style caught the ear of the music supervisor for boxing reality show "The Contender," who commissioned him to write tracks for the show. "Fired Up" was heard in every episode, while "Put 'Em Down," "All I Got" and "Adrenaline" were used throughout the season.

"Getting to meet [Sylvester] Stallone and Sugar Ray [Leonard] was cool, but the biggest perk was going to Vegas and performing for the season finale," Hush recalled. "Looking out at Cuba Gooding Jr. and him telling me to rock it, how can you pass that up? Everybody [was there]. Brooke Burke, Eddie Murphy, that was the bomb."

Hush is considering "Put 'Em Down" as his second single, but right now he's focusing on the Em-produced "Hush Is Coming," an introductory track featuring Nate Dogg. "It's the first track that Marshall gave me and it had the heavy guitars, everything I was going for," Hush said.

The single just went to radio stations in advance of Hush's album, *Bulletproof*, which is due in August. Talib Kweli, Obie Trice and D12's Bizarre, Kuniva and Swift are among the album's guests.

Although his tracks are more guitar-heavy than those by his Detroit cohorts, Hush's rapping style is similar, mixing street grit with classroom phrasing. Like Em, he has a knack for making words rhyme that really shouldn't and for sprinkling pop-culture references in even his most personal tracks.

"We all definitely have the same kind of syllable style," Hush said. "I think we all kind of just developed it together, I don't think any one person really started it. We would listen to a lot of stuff from New York, a lot stuff from L.A., and Detroit is that mixture of everything. ... And out of that I think D12 and Slum Village and all of us honed it in our own way, but we do have a unique sound that keeps us as a movement."

Of course, as "8 Mile" depicted, battle rapping is also a big part of Detroit's hip-hop scene. And while Hush faced off against the city's champion in a fist battle, the two have never thrown verbal blows.

"We used to ride around in a car and freestyle and stuff like that, but we have never done head-to-head," Hush said.

"And I probably don't want to," he added with a smile.